

# A JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

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## COMMENTS ON THE POPE NUMBER

Our last issue has brought in a number of interesting comments, some of which are too stimulating not to be passed on.

The first page editorial, particularly, resulted in some sizzling remarks. Representing the outraged romanticists, Captain Bill Todd (formerly of Lehigh) wrote from somewhere in England on May 30. (Bill, by the way, a week later landed in France on D-day, was hit in the leg by a German shell, and after a hectic experience is now back in a hospital in this country.)

"My dear Sir!" Bill begins, "Way I say that I was horror-struck at your editorial 'A Thought for the Day.'" Such an "ingratiating, insinuating" approach, he insists, may well result in serious misconceptions. "And the Machiavellian glee with which you picture 'the surprise of unsuspecting students' as they are led to this Mongolian brain child of suspect origin leaves me speechless, aghast at such effrontery. If droning pedantry, tick-tock meters, and nicely chiseled conundrums are the criteria to be accepted as a basis of judgment for literature, then I fear that literary art may become a well ordered, systematically fashioned, formal science, and not at all a free expression of art. Can you be serious?"

Sgt. G. S. Alleman (now in a camp in Florida) takes an equally determined opposite view.

"You are quite right in saying that most modern anthologies and shorter histories assume that Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats are superior as poets. Probably you are also right in saying that most of the trade -- certainly in high

school and elementary college teaching -- accepts the attitude without much question. How much of this is strong personal preference and how much merely tradition is uncertain. I think the tradition is much more important, especially since the academic system tends to turn out receptive young men who have no particular strong reactions and hence get them second hand through tradition.

"... The things which contributed to the tradition would be worth some investigation. Certainly expansion of what is called education and enormous spread of the book trade had something to do with establishing it. Introduction of teaching of English literature had a lot to do with it. Teachers wanted fairly modern material to appeal to students far too lazy for the stricter disciplines of the classics. And the material they chose tended to fossilize, especially since they wanted non-copyright material or at least material inexpensive to reprint.

"Naturally human laziness helped to fix the pattern. The romanticists are easier for the average reader. Vocabulary is simple; it does not, like Milton's, require some acquaintance with classical allusion. Verse is easier to read since its patterns are usually quite obvious; there is no such thing as the care required to realize that Pope does not see-saw but has a subtle pattern. Finally there is the appeal of humanitarianism, nature, and all the common-places which have been accepted in the public schools."

And Allen Hazen (Hunter) adds: "The idea Landa has coincides with what I have noticed constantly: everybody teaches the 18th century poetry as the awful stuff

from which romanticism rescued the world."

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Joseph Wood Krutch (Columbia) writes: "I was interested in your comments on the possibility of some approach other than the apologetic to the Eighteenth Century poets. Of course we have against us not only the academic tradition but also the fact that any student with literary interests is likely to have contemporary poetry also in mind."

These are merely samples -- but enough to show that the problem of the teaching of Pope and 18th century verse is one that deserves more thought from us today. Won't you air your individual convictions and prejudices in our columns?

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We have many compliments for the verses by Altick and Moore, but space will not permit copying them out. Here, however, are some random comments on other matters.

R. D. Havens (JH): "My grandmother's Irish maid, dusting the books, asked if she could borrow 'the Pope's works.' My grandfather told me the story 40-50 years ago. I wonder how many boys have surreptitiously pored over 'The Rape of the Lock' only to be disappointed?"

H. P. Vincent (Ill. Inst. of Tech.): "I assume that the Pope number will be followed up next year with an even better Swift one." Yes, indeed, and perhaps a Jacobite Memorial issue, too!

L. I. Bredvold (Mich.): "In these days of isolation from the great world of scholarship, these news letters are extraordinarily refreshing and stimulating. Those who are too busy to write you to that effect, you may be sure, are appreciative nevertheless."

Obviously we are delighted to receive such praise, and we sincerely hope that what Bredvold says is true.

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Jim Osborn points out that the Yale Library has had a special

Pope Exhibition, consisting of rare volumes and manuscript letters, some from the collections of Maynard Mack and C. B. Tinker.

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### ANOTHER QUIZ

Jim Tobin (the 2nd part of his article on Pope appears in the June issue of Thought) writes:

"I rise belatedly and out of mind from a pile of masters' theses, term papers, frantic appeals for extensions, fall exhausted into a chair and cry out to Dr. Arbuthnot to shut the door on the mad mob beyond, and pick up the News Letter in blissful escape. And what do I find? Another examination. And what mark do I get? I won't tell you!"

So to keep Jim busy with another examination, we crib a Johnsonian quiz from our sister publication in England, The New Rambler. It was prepared by the Revd. Ronald Park, and we warn only fervent Johnsonians to try it. (For the answers see the last page.)

(1) Of what did Johnson say to Boswell: "Why, Sir, it is much easier to say what it is not?"

(2) In which Square in London was Johnson's handkerchief taken by a pickpocket and recovered by Johnson?

(3) What did Johnson recommend as a cure for indigestion?

(4) Of what present to himself did Johnson quote "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes"?

(5) For whom did Johnson buy a snuff-box as a present in Paris in October 1775?

(6) Against whom did Johnson run a race in Paris?

(7) To what Professorship was Johnson the first person appointed?

(8) On what occasion are we told that "Johnson said nothing but he looked a volume"?

(9) What was the valuable book which Craddock persuaded Lord Harborough to lend to Johnson? How was it recovered?

(10) Of whom did Johnson say: "If you should put a pebble on his chimney-piece you would find it there in the same state a year afterwards?"



## NEWS FROM ENGLAND

John Butt (Applegate, Goring-on-Thames, Reading, England) writes: "There were a few muffled celebrations over here -- a visit to the grotto by members of the Poetry Society, and a sermon preached at Twickenham parish church by Canon Antony Deane who seems, judging from the report in the Times, to hold views differing very little from those of Elwin.... No doubt you have seen Norman Ault's efforts to persuade us that Pope was fond of dogs. In peace time we should certainly have done more, but most of us have little leisure left nowadays.

"One thing that struck both Geoffrey Tillotson & me about the JNL was how very much out of touch we are getting. I had neither heard of nor seen one of the articles you mention on p. 2, and what is more I don't see any prospect of finding them as I cannot get to any of the big libraries. The London Library, which may have some of them, has only recently been reopened after its damage by enemy action some time back. So if you are in touch with any of the writers, it would be a great kindness to beg an off-print for me.

"It is perhaps because I am out of touch that I have got the impression that people in America have not been much interested by the Twickenham edition (Your editor has written to assure him the neglect is largely because we have been unable to secure copies) ....

"The Dunciad is the last volume until after the war. The printer's (and the publisher's) struggle to produce it was lengthy and heroic and cannot be repeated. Norman Ault's volume, which I find fascinating as I read it in instalments, is almost complete. Bateson's part is finished, and I am pleased to hear from you of Mack's admirable progress. I have twice heard of (but not from) Audra since the Germans occupied France, and he & his manuscript were both safe.

"I am collecting addenda and corrigenda in respect of published volumes & shall publish them in the last volume; so please let me have anything which strikes your eye"

Geoffrey Tillotson also comments on the usefulness of our JNL in helping to keep harassed English scholars abreast of research in this country. "I shall find this particular number quite invaluable, & hope in happier days to follow up its references."

We wonder if perhaps during these times we might do more to help the scholars in England keep up on research in this country. One obvious way would be to send more off-prints of recent articles to our colleagues across the Atlantic.

A problem, of course, is the matter of addresses. Your editor gladly offers to serve as a clearing house for information about English addresses, in so far as he is able. If scholars in England will keep him posted as to any changes of address, and shifting interests, he will pass on the data to those over here who are interested.

L. F. Powell sends us the story of an American officer who walked into a well known bookshop in Oxford, looked around the crowded shelves, and finally came to rest before the Johnsonian section. Having made choice of a number of volumes, he took them to an assistant, not a native of England, and said, "I wish you could put me in touch with somebody who knows about Dr. Johnson." Whereupon the assistant answered, "Ah, you must see our Mr. X: he knows all the Professors and Doctors."

Powell adds that his index has "reached the very long article 'London': the dreaded 'Macs' are almost within sight: they cannot be by-passed."

We are delighted to hear of the 80th birthday celebration of Dr. Ernest Sadler, that good Johnsonian who lives in Dr. Taylor's old house, The Mansion, in Ashbourne. Many congratulations and best wishes from us all!

We sadly repeat a meagre dispatch in the New York Times of August 18 to the effect that the Johnson House in Gough Square was recently hit by a robot bomb. It will be remembered that during the earlier "blitz" the roof and attic were burned out. In the meantime these were temporarily repaired and the building was being used by the National Fire Service. Fortunately, so far as we can tell from the account, in this last hit the "damage was confined to blasted windows and inner partitions."

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Kenneth Sisam (OUP) in a recent letter gives some idea of the effects of the robot bombs. "They are spectacular and nasty weapons. In strong buildings they blow out windows and doors and bring down the ceilings over a wide area, and they tumble down shaky buildings of weak construction, of which there are a good many in our towns.

They don't do much harm against shelters, but people cannot be in shelters all the time, and there is only a few seconds' notice for each missile, so that distant shelters are no use. Above all, they send glass flying in every direction, producing the maximum of bleeding and minor casualties for a given number of serious casualties."

Sisam adds, however, that up to the present time (July 20) the damage which a visitor after the war would find in London might be less than he would expect. We devoutly hope that August will not seriously change the picture.

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E. S. de Beer gives some indication of the Londoner's reactions to the new attack. "A friend writes from the country: 'We think you are so brave to stay in London.' And we just laugh. At the library: 'I should warn you that a doodlebug usually misses this place about half-past six.' I own up to having a thorough attack of jitters about once every twelve hours. But it passes quickly....

"They are I think having a considerable effect on English temper; chiefly to stiffen it against the Germans."

The July meeting of the Johnson Club, de Beer adds, had to be cancelled, since "no one would be in the right mood for it." On the whole, however, he insists that life is very bearable. "Trains and some other services are becoming hard to come by. But the London Library opened yesterday and seems to be functioning very satisfactorily; it will however need a good deal of work after the war." This again was early in July. Nervously we await later news.

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We are deeply grieved to report the death in action in Italy of the son of S. C. Roberts of Cambridge.

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The New Rambler for July, 1944, (No. 5) has just arrived, and is, as usual, full of interesting articles. The following is the table of contents for this last issue: "Taxation in Dr. Johnson's Time" by C. H. Tolley; "Songs of the Streets" from Punch; Sept. 29, 1883: "Samuel Johnson and John Burns" by W. Kent; "Dr. Johnson and His Cats" by A. C. Burley; "Dr. Richard Mead (Part II)" by W. E. Havart; "Some Notes on Dr. Johnson's Hebridean Tour (Part I)" by W. H. Graham. Included also is another examination paper by R. Park and numerous bits of news and comment on Johnsonian matters.

Because of the paper shortage, the number of copies of this mimeographed publication which can be sent out is severely limited. Nevertheless, we are sure that the editors will be glad to hear from any of our subscribers who would like to receive numbers if they are available. Address communications to A. Lloyd-Jones, 102 Gordon Rd., Ealing, W. 13, London.

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Listed to be sold at Sotheby's on June 5-7 were a number of letters addressed to Mrs. Siddons, and one hundred and thirty-five letters from Cowper to John Newton.



## REGINALD HARVEY GRIFFITH

On Sunday, June 11, the Fort Worth Star Telegram carried the report from Austin of a three-fold celebration of the day before.

"A 42-year career of distinguished service to the University of Texas and the world of literature was honored here Saturday when Dr. R.H. Griffith, university English professor, was saluted at the reception in recognition of his retirement to modified service next month.

"This reception will be part of a week-end observance on the campus of two other significant literary events -- the 200th anniversary of the death of the poet Alexander Pope and the 25th anniversary of the university's purchase of the Wrenn Library -- both closely identified with the life work of Dr. Griffith.

"As a bibliographer and authority on Pope, Dr. Griffith is known around the world, and it was Dr. Griffith who instigated the purchase of the Wrenn collection that now forms the cornerstone of the university's extensive rare book holdings."

Nearly all of the other Texas newspapers carried long news stories, as well as editorials, describing the celebration. For once, the devoted life work of a research scholar has been appreciated in his own home community. And certainly Griffith's contribution to the fame of the state of Texas is no small one. Through his untiring efforts the university library has become one of the great reference institutions of the world. Indeed, we may not quibble over the claim made by the Dallas Morning News that "The combined rare book collections now found at the university, embracing some 35,000 pieces, manuscripts and first editions, rank first in the nation among state-owned institutions and third among colleges. The university is surpassed only by Harvard and Yale for English and American literature."

Of chief interest to 18th century scholars, in addition to the Wrenn library, is the extensive Aitken collection purchased in

1921. As a sample of the completeness of the library's holdings, the newspaper comments that when Griffith's Bibliography of Pope appeared, listing 752 Pope items, it was found that at least 650 were available in the Texas collection.

Here, then, is a monument to the work of a great scholar, to whom we all extend the heartiest congratulations and thanks. And let none of us waste valuable time mooning about, bewailing our inability to visit the British Museum and English country houses, while the vast resources of our own collections have not been exhausted.

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## SOME SWIFT RESEARCH

Harold Williams writes from Buntingford, Herts.: "I have practically ready for publication a new edition of The Journal to Stella. I think this does add to any previous editions. It will, after the war, be published by the Clarendon Press, who brought out my edition of Swift's Poems."

Herbert Davis (Smith) writes that volume IX of his Swift edition, which contains the tracts written between 1720 and 1723 and all of the sermons, is now in the press. In this volume he is collaborating with Louis Landa (Chicago). He adds: "I understand that paper is available for this volume and it is possible that we shall go on with other volumes as fast as I can get them ready."

At this time Davis is also investigating the whereabouts of all Swift manuscripts and Swiftiana in the United States. If any of our readers knows of holdings by libraries or persons in out of the way places, we are sure that Davis will be very grateful for such information.

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## OTHER RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Lewis M. Knapp (Colo. Col.) writes that his "complicated jigsaw puzzle" having to do with Smollett "is being fitted together slowly

but surely. Since 1926 many new pieces have been found, but more are needed. The 'finished' portrait should be unveiled about two hundred years after 'The Tears of Scotland.' If anyone has a scrap of Smollettiana which is not indispensable to his own project, will he not toy with the idea of informing me of it? It would help a little -- perhaps surprisingly."

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#### AN AMERICAN BOSWELL

All Johnsonians, we feel sure, will be interested in C. G. Osgood's recent article in the April, 1944, Princeton Univ. Library Chronicle about the little known reminiscences of Dr. Benjamin Rush, who in the autumn of 1768 met Reynolds, Johnson, Goldsmith, and others of the celebrated London group. Rush's comments on these famous men have long been ignored by students of the 18th century and we welcome Osgood's reminder and his quotations.

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#### MEMBERS IN SERVICE

The last we heard of Ernest Mossner he was in Newfoundland. His address is Base QM Det., APO 862, Care Postmaster, New York, N. Y.

Maury Quinlan, author of Victorian Prelude, has been honorably discharged from the army, and temporarily has a position in the Personnel Dept. of General Motors at Bristol, Conn.

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#### KRUTCH ON JOHNSON

One of the most eagerly awaited books in a long time is Joseph Wood Krutch's biographical and critical study of Dr. Johnson, which is announced for publication in November by Henry Holt, Publishers. Since your editor had the good fortune to read the book in

manuscript, he is not merely talking through his hat when he says that it is one of the best works yet written about Johnson. Wait and see.

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#### THE COGERS

As he promised some time ago, O.D. Savage, Hon. Sec. of the Johnson Society of London, has sent us an interesting account of the famed Society of Cogers. Unfortunately it is too long to include in this present issue, but we promise to make it a part of our next.

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#### UNIQUE 18TH CENTURY BOOKS

George L. McKay of the Grolier Club has very kindly sent us a list of 18th century titles in the exhibition of unique books, pamphlets and broadsides held at the Grolier Club last spring. In a later number of the JNL we will give some of the titles so that our members may check whether any other copies do exist.

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#### QUIZ ANSWERS

- (1) Poetry.
- (2) Berkeley Square.
- (3) Dried orange-peel finely powdered taken in a glass of red port.
- (4) Mrs. Boswell's gift of a jar of orange marmalade of her own making.
- (5) Lucy Porter, his step-daughter.
- (6) Giuseppe Baretti.
- (7) Of Ancient History to the Royal Academy of Arts in 1769.
- (8) When Garrick arrived late at St. James's Coffee-House and said he had been detained at the House of Lords.
- (9) A M.S. volume containing the poems of James I. It lay unopened for over two years and was recovered after Johnson's death.
- (10) Dr. Taylor of Ashbourne.